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Per. J.C. STENNIS

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Stennis Plans Inquiry on Red Military Force

Action Follows Secret Briefing By Rusk, McCone

By GEORGE SHERMAN
Star Staff Writer

The state of the Soviet military power in Cuba is to get further intensive scrutiny in the Senate.

Senator Stennis, Democrat of Mississippi, has announced that his Preparedness Subcommittee will investigate what he calls the rapid "build-up of military might in Cuba."

The Senator made his decision only hours after he heard Secretary of State Rusk and Central Intelligence Agency Director John A. McCone give a two and one-half hour top secret briefing to the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Latin America.

Senator Stennis has set no date for his hearings to begin. But preliminary work is under way. And sources close to the Senator said that top military and intelligence officials would be called into the closed-door sessions within two weeks.

Castro Strengths Threat

In his statement, the Senator said the preparedness group would look into Fidel Castro's military strength, the nature of his weapons and the threat which Cuba may pose to the hemisphere.

"Reports which have come to me indicate that the continued presence and buildup of military might in Cuba is rapidly converting Castro's forces into the second most powerful military power in this hemisphere," Senator Stennis said.

He added that since these forces are controlled by the "hostile rulers of Communist Russia," it is imperative to examine the threat and the state of United States preparedness to counter it.

While all participants at the intelligence briefing yesterday refused to give details, several Senators later indicated surprise and shock over what they were told by Mr. Rusk and Mr. McCone.

"Enormous" Base

Senator Aiken, Republican of Vermont, told reporters after the meeting that he personally believes Soviet Russia has built an "enormously strong military and political base in Cuba" since last July. And it was getting stronger, he added.

Senator Symington, Democrat of Missouri, said that he had been deeply impressed by the high percentage of Soviet personnel in what he called the "Soviet air complex" in Cuba.

But all attending Senators carefully steered clear of saying they they had heard anything to contradict President Kennedy's analysis of the military situation in Cuba at his press conference Thursday.

The President said that about 16,000 to 17,000 Soviet personnel still remain on the island to operate anti-aircraft missiles and other technical installations. He added that Cuba remains under daily surveillance, and that no evidence indicates the return of offensive weapons to Cuba.

Keating's Estimate

Senator Keating, Republican of New York, has declared that he has information, "confirmed by official Government sources," that the Soviet Union has poured 20,000 men and munitions into Cuba and that a buildup of installations is continuing.

He said the munitions include warplanes capable of carrying nuclear warheads, and with a range embracing many target areas in the United States and Latin America.

But the Senators who questioned Mr. Rusk and Mr. McCone indicated that they had received no information about "fissionable material" being in Cuba.

Senator Humphrey, Democrat of Minnesota, said that the briefing had not revealed "any evidence of new strength" beyond that already mentioned by the President.

He appealed for a partisan

truce in dealing with past and future Cuban policy.

"If Congress indulges itself in a wholesale inquiry of the past," he said, "very little new information will be gained, and only old sores will be opened, with plenty of blame going to both Republicans and Democrats."

Senator Russell, Democrat of Georgia, chairman of the Armed Services Committee, told the Associated Press that intelligence reports have not confirmed a buildup of the scope described in recent claims.

But "intelligence has been in error before," he cautioned. He recalled that "the same sources" reporting this buildup disclosed the presence of Soviet missiles and bombers in Cuba last summer "days before our intelligence people knew it" as provable fact.

McNamara to Testify

Chances are considered good that Secretary of Defense McNamara will be questioned about the Cuban military situation when he testifies before the Armed Services Committee on Wednesday.

Meanwhile controversy continued over whether the Kennedy administration planned, promised and then withdrew United States air cover from the ill-fated Cuban invasion of April, 1961.

After the briefing yesterday, Senator Morse, Democrat of Oregon, chairman of the subcommittee, said that Mr. McCone and Mr. Rusk had been questioned closely on that score.

But other sources said later that nothing new had been gained from the cross-questioning. The two officials gave full support to Mr. Kennedy's contention at his press conference that United States air cover had neither been planned nor withdrawn.

Attorney General's Remarks

Two interviews by Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy set off the current round of controversy over the Bay of Pigs invasion. The Attorney General denied that air cover was with-

Yesterday Florida publisher Jack W. Gore said that he would stand by his story that President Kennedy confided to a group of Florida newspapermen his personal cancellation of air protection in the invasion under pressure from United Nations Ambassador Adlai E. Stevenson.

The Fort Lauderdale news executive said he was "not surprised that the President has seen fit to throw his support behind his own brother." At his press conference, President Kennedy flatly denied Mr. Gore's story of the May 10 meeting at the White House with eight Florida publishers and editors.

And yesterday Senator Smathers, Democrat of Florida, who was present at the meeting, threw his support behind the President.

"I was sitting across the table from the President at the meeting referred to and was in a position to hear all the conversation that went on," Senator Smathers insisted.

"I am certain there was no conversation of the character described by my good friend Jack Gore."

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